



Labor & Economic Briefing

David C. Hollister, Director

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Here is a summary of headlining accomplishments from the last month:

Creating & Retaining Michigan Jobs

Governor Announces \$2 Million to Help Create Jobs, Promote Private Investment in Five Michigan Communities: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced on Oct. 20th more than \$2 million in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding that will lead to the creation of 134 new jobs and spur more than \$27.1 million in private investment in Deckerville, Handy Township, Iron Mountain, Kalkaska, Muskegon County and Spring Lake. The grants, made available through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), will be used for infrastructure improvements to facilitate company expansions and economic development planning activities. The projects include:

- The village of **Deckerville** will use a \$300,000 grant to make road improvements to accommodate the expansion of Trim Trends. The metal stamping company plans to invest \$7.5 million and create 30 new jobs. The company currently employs 257 people at the Deckerville facility.
- The city of **Iron Mountain** will use a \$15,000 grant to conduct a marketing analysis and planning study. The results of the year-long study will be used to identify the market areas of the downtown district, analyze the existing businesses and examine the demographics of the area in order to attract new business and jobs.
- The village of **Kalkaska** has been offered \$80,000 to support the redevelopment of the long-vacant Sieting Hotel. The project is expected to spur \$600,000 in private investment and create eight new jobs. Kalkaska will use the grant to help install a public elevator in the two-story structure which, upon completion, will have nine rooms, a restaurant and space for four retail establishments.
- **Muskegon County** will use a \$50,000 grant to help finance a comprehensive study to identify agribusinesses that show commercial viability for a prospective agricultural industrial park. The proposed location for the park would be the surplus lands within the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System.
- The village of **Spring Lake** has been offered a \$591,120 grant for a downtown redevelopment project. The village will use the funding to make streetscape improvements, including new streetlights and sidewalks to help finance the conversion of 11 underutilized acres in downtown Spring Lake into new office and commercial space. Redstone Development will lead the redevelopment activities which are expected to create 40 new jobs and spur more than \$4 million in private investment.



**Governor
Jennifer M.
Granholm**

Six Major Economic Development Projects to Create 1,224 New Jobs: Six major economic development projects are expected to create 1,224 Michigan jobs and more than \$79 million in private investment as a result of assistance offered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The projects include three company expansions and three brownfield redevelopments. The projects are expected to create a total of 1,224 jobs, including 804 directly by the companies and redevelopments. According to economic analyses performed by the University of Michigan, an additional 420 indirect jobs are expected to result from increased economic activity associated with the company expansions.

Company Expansions:

- **Grupo Antolin, Marlette:** This Spain-based manufacturer of auto interior trim components and systems will invest \$8.8 million to expand its existing manufacturing facility in Marlette. A Single Business Tax (SBT) credit valued at more than \$1 million convinced the company to choose Michigan over a competing site in Canada. The expansion will create 310 new jobs, including 120 manufacturing jobs directly by the company.
- **E.A.B. Fabrication, Quincy:** An SBT credit valued at \$331,000 helped convince the auto supplier to expand its operations and build a new facility in Quincy rather than at a competing site in Indiana. The expansion is expected to generate \$800,000 in private investment and create 137 new jobs, including 75 directly by the company. The MEDC also offered E.A.B. an Economic Development Job Training grant worth up to \$12,500 to train 25 new workers.

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- **Musashi Auto Parts-Michigan Inc., Battle Creek:** This Japan-based auto supplier will expand its operations in Battle Creek over a competing site in South Carolina due to an SBT credit valued at more than \$1.4 million. The expansion is expected to **generate more than \$26 million in private investment and 346 new jobs**, including 178 manufacturing jobs directly by the company. Musashi Auto Parts-Michigan primarily manufactures automotive transmission gears, cam shafts and differential assemblies and employs 361 workers in Michigan.

Brownfield Redevelopments:

- **DLI Properties LLC, Detroit:** DLI will use a brownfield SBT credit worth more than \$2.6 million to help redevelop contaminated, underutilized property adjacent to 2000 Brush Street in downtown Detroit. DLI will build a new building featuring 107,000 square feet of Class A office space. The project is expected to **create 132 construction jobs** and spur **more than \$28 million in private investment**.
- **Martineau Holdings Limited Dividend Housing Association LLC, Grand Rapids:** Martineau Holdings plans to invest more than \$7.5 million to rehabilitate several properties along the 100 block of South Division Avenue in the historic Heartside neighborhood. The mixed use facility will include 23 live/work apartment units. Known as Dwelling Place, the development will also include an additional 12,800 square feet of commercial space. Martineau will use state and local tax capture valued at more than \$1.6 million and an SBT credit valued at \$752,900 to help prepare the site for redevelopment.
- **Pinnacle Commerce Center LLC, Redford Township:** Pinnacle will use state and local tax capture valued at more than \$1.6 million to help redevelop the 980,000-square-foot former Ford Motor Distribution Center. The developer plans to reconfigure the single-tenant building into a multi-tenant commercial facility to include warehousing and industrial space. The project is expected to **create 400 new jobs** and **spur \$8.2 million in private investment**. In addition to the tax capture, Pinnacle was recently approved for a brownfield SBT credit through the MEDC valued at \$820,000 to help with demolition and site preparation.

Grant to Help Retain Over 300 Jobs at Polynorm Automotive in Novi: A \$90,000 state grant will help preserve the jobs of over 300 workers at Polynorm Automotive North America in Novi. Company leaders say specialized training in lean manufacturing and technical fields for 157 of their employees will make Polynorm more competitive in the global market. The grant is being provided through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Economic Development Job Training (EDJT) program. Polynorm has chosen Oakland Community College to provide its training. Under the requirements of the program, the company will provide a minimum 25 percent funding match. Polynorm is a leading Tier One supplier to the automotive industry, specializing in project management, design engineering, development and production of pressed, Class A body panels and components using advanced steel, aluminum and plastic materials. The company employs more than 2,600 people at six production and engineering centers worldwide. Since 1994, more than \$263 million in Economic Development Job Training grants have helped more than 500,000 Michigan workers improve their skills and enhance the competitiveness of their employers.

Eight Major Economic Development Projects Creating 3,900 New Jobs Announced: Eight major economic development projects are expected to **create almost 4,000 Michigan jobs** as a result of assistance offered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The projects include company expansions and brownfield redevelopment projects as well as two new corporate headquarters locations. The projects are expected to create a total of 3,909 jobs, including 2,029 directly by the companies and redevelopments. According to economic analyses performed by the University of Michigan, **an additional 1,880 indirect jobs are expected to result** from increased economic activity associated with the company expansions.

Company Expansions:

- **Atlantic Automotive Components, LLC, Benton Harbor:** This leading manufacturer of auto interior plastic components will **invest \$21.8 million** to expand its existing facility in Benton Harbor. A Single Business Tax (SBT) credit valued at \$707,000 helped convince the company to choose Michigan over a competing site in Indiana. The project will **create up to 162 new jobs**, including 71 directly by the company. Atlantic is a limited liability corporation 70 percent owned by Michigan-based Visteon. Atlantic employs approximately 383 employees at its two Benton Harbor locations.
- **Ceradyne, Inc., Wixom:** This California-based developer and world-wide manufacturer of advanced ceramic materials used in defense, auto and health care applications will open a new state-of-the-art commercial and military vehicle armoring research and development center in Wixom. An SBT credit valued at more than \$946,000 convinced the company to locate the center in Michigan instead of Lexington, Kentucky. The company plans to **invest \$2.7 million** in the project, which is expected to **create a total of 69 jobs**, including 52 directly by Ceradyne.
- **Meridian Automotive Systems, Inc, Fowlerville:** An SBT credit valued at more than \$2.2 million has convinced the Tier One auto components supplier to locate a new \$28 million, 250,000-square-foot assembly facility in Fowlerville. The company had considered locating the project at a competing site in Ohio. Meridian will **create a total of 681 jobs** including 250 directly by the company.
- **Mobius Microsystems, Inc., Detroit:** An emerging leader in analog and mixed-signal semiconductor intellectual property solutions, Mobius plans to establish its headquarters in downtown Detroit instead of Columbus, Ohio, as a result of an SBT credit valued at more than \$4.3 million. The Ann Arbor-based company plans to **invest a total of \$12 million** in the project, which is expected to **create a total of 1,594 jobs**, including 500 directly by the company.

- **Nicholas Plastics, Allendale Township:** The diversified manufacturer of automotive plastics products plans to invest \$18 million to expand in Allendale Township. An SBT credit valued at more than \$3.7 million helped convince Nicholas to construct a 120,000-square-foot addition to their existing facility rather than at a competing site in Mexico. The project is expected to create 364 new jobs, including 250 manufacturing jobs directly by the company within five years.
- **Saturn Electronics & Engineering, Inc., Coopersville:** The high-tech company plans to expand its Coopersville facility to support the research, design, development and manufacture of advanced electro-hydraulic control devices (solenoids). An SBT credit valued at more than \$1.6 million helped convince Saturn to expand in Coopersville over a competing site in Mexico. Based in Auburn Hills, the company plans to invest at least \$10 million in the project, which is expected to create 247 new jobs, including 124 directly by the company.

Brownfield Redevelopments:

- **Lear Corporation, Southfield:** Lear will redevelop approximately 11 acres adjacent to its existing 25-acre site along the west side of Telegraph Road between Eight and Nine Mile roads into an expanded corporate headquarters complex. The \$70 million project will benefit from state and local brownfield tax capture valued at more than \$7.2 million as well as a brownfield SBT credit valued at more than \$4.8 million. The new headquarters is expected to create 200 new jobs and retain 125 at another Southfield location.
- **Strathmore Development Company through affiliate Lower Town Development Group, LLC/Broadway Village, Ann Arbor:** The developer plans to utilize state and local tax capture valued at more than \$66.3 million to revitalize a currently underutilized and environmentally contaminated site located along the 1100 block of Broadway in Ann Arbor. The 6.4-acre mixed-use development, known as Broadway Village, will include medical office space, 145 apartments as well as retail shops, parking facilities and a proposed pub and restaurant. Lower Town Development is expected to invest \$148 million in the project, which is expected to create 582 jobs.

Aisin Seiki to Invest More than \$30 Million, Create 56 High-Tech Jobs: Handy Township, near Fowlerville, is receiving \$1 million in funding for a major economic development project which is expected to create over 50 high-tech jobs. The grant, made available through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Community Development Block Grant program, will help secure a new, 750-acre automotive proving ground and testing center. Japan-based Aisin Seiki Co. Ltd. plans to invest more than \$30 million in the project. The township will use the funding for improvements to public infrastructure including sanitary sewer lines to service the new track and a 24,000-square-foot research center. Aisin Seiki, headquartered in Kariya City, Aichi, Japan, is a world-wide supplier of auto body parts, drive train components, engine, brake and chassis parts as well as information-related products. In North America, the Aisin Group has 26 manufacturing, R & D and sales centers including the Plymouth-based Aisin World Corp. of America. The company employs 6,400 associates in North America.

Tax Credits Expected to Generate Up To 800 New Jobs in Wayne County: Two brownfield sites in Wayne County will be transformed to create new residential and commercial developments, thanks to nearly \$1.3 million in Single Business Tax credits approved by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm noted the tax credits will spur more than \$12.8 million in private investment and create as many as 800 jobs for Michigan workers. Brownfield SBT credits were awarded to the following projects:

- **Detroit:** E & B Brewery and Lofts Inc. will use a \$467,588 credit to help redevelop the former E & B Brewery building located at 1551 Winder in the Eastern Market district of Detroit. The developer will invest more than \$4.6 million to build 36 loft-style apartments and 2,000 square feet of commercial space.
- **Redford Township:** Pinnacle Commerce Center LLC will use an \$820,000 credit to redevelop the former Ford Distribution Center located at 12723 Telegraph Road into a multi-tenant commercial facility. The project is expected to spur more than \$8.2 million in private investment.

\$1.4 Million Tax Credits Will Help Convert Brownfield Sites in Saginaw & Bay City: Two brownfield sites in Bay City and Saginaw will be transformed to create residential and commercial developments, thanks to \$1.4 million in Single Business Tax credits approved by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The tax credits will spur more than \$12.3 million in private investment. Brownfield incentives were awarded to the following projects:

- **Bay City:** Marina Place LLC will use a credit valued at up to \$1 million to help redevelop an obsolete warehouse located on the downtown Bay City riverfront. The 42,500-square-foot building will become a four-story, 37-unit condominium complex. The developer will invest more than \$11.9 million in the project.
- **Saginaw:** 212 Janes LLC will use a \$45,096 credit to redevelop a former dry cleaning facility located at 212 Janes. The developer will invest more than \$450,000 to renovate the facility into commercial space for use by AKT Environmental Services with loft-style apartments above. The project is expected to spur more than \$8.2 million in private investment and bring five jobs into downtown Saginaw.

\$118,000 Credit Encourages Redevelopment, Creating 50 New Jobs to Transform Former Herman Miller Site in Zeeland: The site of the former Herman Miller plant in Zeeland will be transformed into a retail center, thanks to a \$118,000 Single Business Tax (SBT) credit approved by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The tax credit will spur more than \$1.1 million in private investment and create as many as 50 jobs for Michigan workers. GS Properties LLC plans to use the brownfield SBT credit to help redevelop the Zeeland site. The original facility located on Washington Avenue will be demolished to make way for a new, 20,000-square-foot retail center. The city has pledged \$255,000 in local tax capture to the redevelopment effort.

Leading the Nation in Information Technology

DLEG Recognized as Emerging Technology Partner: DLEG received the "Education Partner" award from Lake Michigan College for its partnership with the college in emerging technologies. The award was presented to DLEG Deputy Director Bob Swanson at Lake Michigan College's annual report to the community on Oct. 28. The college received a \$100,000 DLEG grant to support the development and promotion of educational and training programs in emerging technology fields such as nanotechnology. The award was part of the college's "New Wave of Thinking Awards" presented on Oct. 28. *At right, Director David C. Hollister holds the "Education Partner" award from Lake Michigan College in honor of their partnership in emerging technologies.*



Detroit is in Top 5 Most Broadband Wired Cities: Nielsen//NetRatings, the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis, reported the top local markets connected via broadband at-home lists Detroit in the top five cities. Tracking 35 local markets in the U.S., Nielsen//NetRatings found that the cities of San Diego, Phoenix, Detroit, New York and Sacramento represented the top five wired local markets connected via broadband access with penetration rates of 65 percent or higher. Detroit ranked 67 percent of Percent of Broadband Within Local Market.



Michigan recently received an award for its #1 ranking in the nation for information technology to transform and improve government. Holding the award are DLEG Director David Hollister and Department of Information Technology (DIT) Director Teri Takai. Also shown (from left) Al Pohl, DLEG Finance & Administrative Services director; Bob Swanson, DLEG Deputy Director; Dennis Sykes, DLEG Deputy Director; and Ken Theis, DIT Deputy Director.

DLEG Shares in Digital Government Award: As part of an ongoing series of meetings to strategize about the department's technology initiatives for the future, Director Hollister recently met with Director Teri Takai from the Department of Information Technology. A recently released national survey ranked Michigan first in the nation in the use of information technology to transform and improve government. The Digital States Survey, conducted by the Center for Digital Government in conjunction with Government Technology magazine, is the nation's most recognized and respected study of information technology in all 50 states. Michigan received the number one ranking for the first time, moving up from a second place finish from the previous survey taken in 2002. Governor Granholm accepted the award at a recent National Governor's Association meeting. Director Takai shared the award with Director Hollister, stating "all of the departments should share in this award...it's because of the hard work of many DLEG employees in partnership with our Information Technology employees that we received this award." Director Hollister appreciated taking time from the meeting to share in the recognition. As an example of DLEG's involvement, UIA contributed to the honor through its Remote Initial Claims Centers (RICCs) and its Employer Filed Claims (EFC) program. Both rely heavily on electronic information gathering. The RICC initiative streamlined and improved unemployment claims taking and processing by using telephone, Internet and electronic systems for accepting claims. EFC allows employers to electronically submit unemployment claims on behalf of their laid-off workers. Both the RICC and EFC initiatives were included in the state's entry for the award. Other top finishers in the award for digital government included the State of Washington in second place and Virginia at number three. Rounding out the top ten were Indiana, Arizona, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Arkansas, Colorado and North Carolina (tied for 10th).

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Muskegon is First Michigan County to Pilot Digital Divide Investment Program: The Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA) announced that Muskegon County became the first in Michigan to pilot a new broadband grant program to provide affordable high-speed Internet service to low-and moderate-income families. Broadband service providers interested in participating in this program, can learn more about the program at <http://www.co.muskegon.mi.us>. The new Digital Divide Investment Program (DDIP) was created by a grant approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Washington D.C. The new program will begin with pilot locations in Muskegon and Marquette Counties. Earlier this summer, Governor Granholm announced that Michigan was the first state in the nation given approval to use federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support large-scale deployment of broadband infrastructure. Muskegon is one of two pilot locations that will use its CDBG monies to facilitate and test the implementation of this new program. The program combines MBDA loans with CDBG dollars and is intended to make broadband service more affordable for low and moderate-income households throughout the entire county. DDIP is a collaborative program supported by the Michigan Broadband Development Authority, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) -- all agencies within the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. If trials prove successful, the state intends to replicate the program in other communities across Michigan.

Broadband Loan Helps ACD.net Expand Services to Southwest Michigan: The Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA) recently provided financing to ACD.net, a Lansing-based and family-owned business, that provides integrated communications to its customers (broadband DSL, dial-up Internet service, fiber optic networks, consulting and integration). It also has significant experience in a variety of businesses including network integration, software development, personal computer assembly and Internet and telecommunications services. The loan proceeds are being utilized by Lansing-based ACD.net to expand broadband service to Berrien, Van Buren, Cass and St. Joseph Counties. The proceeds will allow the company to upgrade portions of the network infrastructure and assets of Quantum Connections based in St. Joseph, and allow deployment of new generation broadband service into 17 communities within Berrien, Van Buren, Cass and St. Joseph Counties. Thus, expanded and improved service will be provided to the cities of St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Buchanan, Cassopolis, Coloma, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, New Buffalo, Niles, Baroda, Bridgman, Stevensville, Paw Paw, Portage, Allegan, South Haven and Centerville.

Michigan Business Entity Documents Now Available Online: Michigan business entity documents are now just a click away for businesses, consumers and media representatives. The DLEG Bureau of Commercial Services Corporation Division worked in partnership with the Michigan Department of Information Technology (DIT) to make it easier for its customers to obtain copies of business documents for corporations, limited liability companies and limited partnerships. Documents now available for viewing online include articles of incorporation, annual reports, dissolution of corporations and assumed corporation names. "Our customers now have the information they need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They no longer have to call, fax or mail a request for the documents they need – they're just a click away," DLEG Director David C. Hollister said. "This will also free up Corporation Division staff, who answer hundreds of requests a day from businesses, consumers and media representatives seeking copies of business documents." To view documents, enter a corporation name in the Business Entity Search engine at http://www.cis.state.mi.us/bcs_corp/sr_corp.asp and click on "Search Database by Name" and Search. Click on the name of the business. Click on "Images Available" in the box at the bottom of the screen to view a list by date of all documents on file pertaining to that business. Click on the camera icon, which will open an image viewer to view a document. Anyone experiencing trouble with the viewer can click on the Help Menu icon at the top. Prior to the launch, the Corporation Division logged 6,000 phone calls a week from people requesting information with about 60 percent of those callers representing businesses, lenders, law firms, and accountants and the remaining 40 percent who are the general public. These customers will now be able to get the name of officers and directors of corporations or find out if a particular document has been filed without the inconvenience of calling the office or paying a fee.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

Governor, DLEG Announce Entrepreneurship Education Grant Initiative: As part of her plan for making Michigan the economic powerhouse state of the 21st century, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and DLEG announced the state will award \$1.2 million in competitive grants for a new initiative designed to help develop entrepreneurship educational programs in high schools and community colleges. The initiative is led by DLEG's Bureau of Career Education Programs, which is charged with improving the state's infrastructure for entrepreneurship advocacy and support. Each of the state's 25 existing Tech Prep Consortia may apply for the grant. "The goal of the initiative is two-fold," Director David C. Hollister said. "First we want to develop postsecondary entrepreneurship certificate and degree programs, including an associate's degree in entrepreneurship for high school and college students. Second, we'll encourage schools to offer grade-level-appropriate entrepreneurship curricula to ensure that all high school students graduate with knowledge of what it takes to start and run a business. It's an opportunity for secondary and postsecondary institutions to work collaboratively with input from business and industry." The grant was announced at the "Growing Entrepreneurship in Michigan" conference on September 24 in Lansing. Over 140 people attended the conference, including secondary and postsecondary education partners and representatives of the Tech Prep Consortia. Grants will be funded by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. The grants will be announced in November. The grant period will run from November 15, 2004, through August 31, 2005.

Granholm Announces Awards to Encourage Academic Entrepreneurs: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced on Oct. 4 the first annual Governor's U-ACE awards, which will grant two \$25,000 prizes to Michigan university researchers. The University Award for Commercialization Excellence (U-ACE) was created to recognize and celebrate the successful commercialization of technology stemming from the research and entrepreneurial efforts of researchers at Michigan's public universities. The awards are the result of recommendations put forth at last year's University Summit on Economic Development and Collaboration. Convened by Governor Granholm, the summit brought together the presidents of Michigan's 15 public universities, leaders of private technology companies and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to focus on invigorating university-led growth in technology transfer and commercialization. Applicants will be reviewed by a selection committee of university, government and private industry professionals. Key criteria include the economic impact of the research and its stage of commercialization. Researchers may be nominated by their academic colleagues, external partners or themselves. For more information on the award and how to submit a nomination, please visit <http://www.pcsum.org/U-ACE/>. Deadline for submissions is March 1, 2005. Awards will be announced at a ceremony in April or May.

Celebrating Michigan Business Success

Bekum America Corporation Celebrates 25th Anniversary in North America: Bekum America Corporation celebrated 25 years of successful operations in North America with two days of festivities at its Williamston, Michigan facility. The company paid tribute to Mr. Gottfried Mehnert, Bekum's founder, and dedicated a "State-of-the-Art" blow molding learning center to Mr. Mehnert for his innovation and unrelenting drive to make Bekum America the successful company it has become. David C. Hollister, Director of the Department of Labor & Economic Growth, presented a "special" tribute to Mr. Mehnert for Bekum's outstanding service to the community, noting that the company is "exuberant and remarkable." The company thanked its loyal customer base, its extremely innovative vendors, and its highly skilled and talented employees, which the company considers the "core" of its success. The festivities were highlighted with tours of Bekum's facility, machine demonstrations, plastics materials exhibitions, information and education. There were more than 250 customers, vendors and employees, as well as state and local officials in attendance at this ceremony. Established in 1979, in Williamston, Michigan, Bekum America Corporation is the US subsidiary of Bekum Maschinenfabriken GmbH, the world's leading provider of blow molding technology. Through its US facility, Bekum has designed, manufactured, shipped and serviced thousands of blow molding machines to its loyal customers throughout North and Central America, as well as the Caribbean. Bekum is one of those behind the scenes companies, which manufactures machinery that produces products which people use everyday. Bekum proudly states, "You don't know us but we touch you every day of your life!" In addition to the Williamston, Michigan facility, Bekum Maschinenfabriken's worldwide operations include Headquarters operations and manufacturing facilities in Berlin, and manufacturing plants in Bodenteich, Germany; Traismauer, Austria; and Sao Paulo, Brazil.



DLEG Director David C. Hollister takes a tour of Bekum America Corporation located in Williamston. The corporation celebrated 25 years of successful operations in the U.S. Other facilities are in Germany, Austria and Brazil.

Fostering Vibrant Michigan Cities and Urban Centers

\$8.3 Million Awarded for Improvements in 20 Communities: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced that \$8.3 million in federal funding will be awarded to 20 communities to help finance infrastructure projects that will bring more jobs and investment to core communities around the state. The funding was made available through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Governor's new Michigan Public Works Program. The following 20 communities were chosen to receive funding: **Albion, Bangor, Big Rapids, Calumet, Corunna, Fowlerville, Gaylord, Grayling, Kalkaska, Kingsley, Manistee, Manistique, Masonville Township, Millington, North Branch, Owendale, Republic Township, Rosebush, Seney Township and White Cloud.** Michigan Public Works funding benefits cities, villages and townships where at least 51 percent of the population is composed of low- and moderate-income residents as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The funds may be used for projects that upgrade existing public infrastructure systems by replacing deteriorating or obsolete systems or by adding capacity to existing but burdened systems. Michigan Public Works is part of the Governor's new \$30 million, two-pronged Grow Michigan Communities Initiative that also includes funding for downtown gateway projects.

Eleven Michigan Communities Qualify for Blueprints Grants: The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), in partnership with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Michigan Municipal League (MML), announced on Sept. 13th that 11 communities have been chosen to participate in the competitive Blueprints for Michigan's Downtowns grant program. They are: Charlotte, Fremont, Highland Park, Houghton, Howard City, Imlay City, Ionia, Linden, Menominee, Saline and Wayland. The program, now in its second year, is designed to assist downtown leaders with formulating a comprehensive action plan to address economic development challenges and encourage growth. The MEDC and MSHDA have committed a total of \$200,000 to fund the project this year. Each Blueprint community will work with the MEDC and the national downtown consulting firm, HyettPalma, to develop an economic development action plan. The process includes defining a long term economic development vision, conducting a market analysis to determine the potential of the downtown area, formulating a definitive course of action and encouraging the formation of a public/ private management team to implement the action plan. Formulating the plan will take approximately five months, with implementation estimated to take five years.

Four Michigan Communities Receive \$85,000 for Economic Development Planning: Federal funding totaling \$85,000 has been earmarked to support economic development planning activities in the cities of Fennville and Hart, the village of Pentwater, and Saginaw County. The grants are being made available through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Community Development Block Grant Program. The projects include:

- The city of **Fennville** will use a \$15,000 grant to help finance a study of the city's long-term wastewater capacity. The goal is to determine if the city needs to upgrade the system to accommodate the growth of its industrial and commercial customers.
- The city of **Hart** plans to conduct a downtown marketing and feasibility study with a \$10,000 grant. The grant will be used to identify the market areas of the downtown district, analyze the existing businesses and examine the demographics of the area in order to attract new business and jobs.

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- The village of **Pentwater** will use a \$10,000 grant to conduct a marketing and feasibility study. The objective is to determine how the village can create and maintain a year-round business climate.
 - **Saginaw County** will benefit from a \$50,000 grant to perform a countywide planning study to develop and assess the medical and health care economy. It will identify key trends in the industry and ways to attract the investment of specific health-care services and medical device firms.

Providing Award-Winning Service

MSHDA Receives National Award for Management Innovation: Michigan State Housing Development Authority received an award for "Management Innovation" at the NCSHA fall conference in Chicago for improvements made to a program designed to help Michigan's low-income population. MSHDA was honored for significant process improvement work in Existing Housing, including the way contracts are designed and administered with Housing Agents. MSHDA's Office of Existing Housing Programs administers 21,029 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV's) in the State of Michigan. These vouchers are utilized by low-income households to help pay their rent. In order to manage this number of vouchers, allocated to all 83 counties in the State of Michigan, MSHDA contracts with 63 independent corporations who act as Housing Agents. Other than the possibility of earning a relatively small bonus amount, Housing Agents were not provided with any incentive or motivation to clean up errors, get all their allocated vouchers under contract, and submit timely re-examination paperwork. The system was revamped to address the problems of operating the Program with less staff due to the state's early out retirement, while at the same time reducing errors, increasing production, and encouraging more efficient, error-free, and timely work. Previously only 7 of 70 Housing Agents were performing at a high rate, while an additional 9 were moderate performers. As of May 2004, the number of high performing Housing Agents had increased to 36 out of 63, with an additional 12 Housing Agents performing at the moderate level. It is clear then that providing Housing Agents with the additional incentive of pay for excellent performance works.

Michigan Wins Six Marketing Awards from the International Economic Development Council: Competing against hundreds of economic development organizations from around the world, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) received six awards from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). No other economic development organization received as many awards. The IEDC's professional economic development awards annually recognize excellence in the economic development profession. Michigan received top honors for the following four initiatives located in an area with a population exceeding 200,000:

- Economic Development General Purpose Promotion ("In-state Postcard Campaign"): A campaign that has successfully increased awareness of the MEDC and its services and programs among Michigan businesses.
- Paid Publication Ad Campaign ("National Ad"): A national print ad campaign that has created an increased awareness and perception of the state as a high tech business location, including helping Michigan consistently rank as a top high tech business location among national business executives and site consultants.
- Technology Based Economic Development marketing ("Michigan Technology Growth Campaign"): Includes all steps taken to bring about a high tech future in the state. The steps include the Technology Tri-Corridor, Commercialization Initiative, Great Lakes Entrepreneur Quest, SmartZones, Business Accelerators and the Technology Awareness Campaign: Telling Michigan's Story.
- Partnership Award ("Southwest Michigan Innovation Center-Stick Around Michigan/Kalamazoo Campaign"): Following the announcement of a large layoff of scientists and support staff by a major pharmaceutical company, this program has resulted in the creation of eleven new companies, hundreds of high-wage jobs and provided a renewed sense of pride in the Kalamazoo community.

Additionally, the MEDC received honorable mention awards in the following categories:

- Newsletter, for the Technology Tri-Corridor (TX3) E-newsletter
- Paid Publication Ad Campaign, for the in-state advertising campaign which increased awareness of the MEDC and its programs and services among Michigan businesses.

Creating Cool: The Economy of Arts and Culture

"Tipping to Cool" is Theme of MCACA Conference: The 10th Annual meeting of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs on Thursday, December 9 will feature Malcolm Gladwell, author of "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference." The meeting will be from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Lansing Center in Lansing. For more information, visit <http://www.tippingtocool.com>.

MEDC Launches E-Magazine Targeting Young Professionals: The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has launched **MiLife MiTimes** e-magazine, a fresh perspective on life, work and culture in Michigan. The monthly e-magazine promotes the state's quality of life to college graduates across the nation. Michigan's public universities are partnering with the MEDC to distribute this medium to attract young professionals to the state's cities. New developments in Michigan's business and arts communities, employment, events and unique places will be featured. **MiLife MiTimes** is the latest component of Governor Jennifer Granholm's "Cool Cities" initiative announced earlier this year. It is aimed at enhancing the state's ability to attract members of the dynamic "creative class" to live and work in Michigan. Subscription to the monthly e-magazine is free. Visit <http://www.milifemetimes.org> to sign up!

Director Hollister Visits Local Cool City Pilot Program Grant Recipients: DLEG Director David Hollister has been touring Cool Cities pilot projects and recent stops included Saginaw, Grand Rapids and Bay City. Designated Cool Cities pilot projects are receiving catalyst grants of up to \$100,000 and will have access to more than \$100 million in state grants, loans and other resources. The initiative, designed to help foster the development of vibrant, attractive cities and urban centers, is part of Governor Granholm's economic development plan for Michigan. The projects receiving grants are located in Alpena, Bay City, Detroit, Ferndale, Flint, Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Marquette, Port Huron, Portland, Saginaw, Saugatuck, Sault Ste. Marie, Traverse City, Warren and Ypsilanti. Each grant recipient will receive a catalyst grant of up to \$100,000, as well as access to a "resource toolbox" that includes information on more than 75 of the state's community improvement grants, loan programs, and assistance programs. Together, this "resource toolbox" and the catalyst grants leverage millions of existing dollars that are now being strategically directed to revitalization projects that present the best opportunity for success.



PHOTO 1: Peter Ross, senior reporter with WZZM, takes notes as Bert Crandall of Alticor talks to DLEG Director David C. Hollister during his visit to Grand Rapids. Alticor is one of three companies which will bring more than 1,000 jobs to Grand Rapids as a result of state tax breaks announced in August. Alticor received a \$5.9 million single business tax credit which will help the company transform a parking lot located at Pearl Street and Campau Avenue into a 300 to 400 room hotel with 250 employees. Construction crews will break ground for the hotel about a year from now and the first visitors should check in sometime in 2007. **PHOTO 2:** Hollister presents a check for \$100,000 to Bay City Mayor Robert Katt for Waterfall Park. Hollister also surprised the community by announcing on behalf of Governor Jennifer Granholm that the city will also be receiving a \$700,000 Michigan Department of Transportation grant for the Pere Marquette Union Station restoration. **PHOTO 3:** Saginaw City Council Member Andrew Coulouris speaks to the crowd at the Oct. 6 presentation of the \$100,000 Cool Cities grant. Listening are Hollister, who presented the check, and Saginaw Mayor Wilmer Jones-Hamm. The grant will be used to redevelop two currently vacant buildings into first-floor commercial and second-floor residential uses. The two buildings are the former Aubry Cleaners building and the Federal Avenue building.

Helping Low- and Moderate-Income Michiganians

MSU Federal Credit Union Becomes First Credit Union to Offer MSHDA Program: Michigan State University Federal Credit Union is now offering Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) loans to facilitate purchasing and financing its members' homes. MSUFCU is the first credit union in the state to offer this program. MSHDA makes low-interest mortgage loans available for new and existing houses, condominiums and manufactured homes. The maximum income limit for metropolitan areas such as Ingham and Oakland counties is \$56,650. Fixed-rate and step loans (a fixed-rate mortgage with a one-time rate increase after three years) are lower than current market rates and offer up to 30-year terms. The maximum price is \$128,000 for new homes and \$105,000 for existing homes. Down payment assistance is also available for individuals or families meeting certain criteria based on total income and number of family members. Lindsay Campbell and husband, David, employed at MSU Housing and Food Services, were the first members to take advantage of the MSUFCU/MSHDA financing with three percent down and a 30-year mortgage with a rate less than 5 percent for their home.

November 14-20 is Homeless Awareness Week 2004 in Michigan: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has made the designation to bring to light the many reasons people are homeless as well as to highlight the shortage of affordable housing for low-income people. Homeless assistance providers are working diligently to bring relief to those without shelter. Statewide, there are more than 750 providers of shelter and services. Tens of thousands of people sleep in emergency shelters in Michigan each night, and many others take refuge in cars, campsites, abandoned buildings and other places unsuitable for humans to reside. As a result, an accurate number of homeless people in Michigan is hard to obtain. Homeless Awareness Week is designed to increase the public's awareness that people are experiencing homelessness in their communities for a variety of reasons, including domestic violence, loss of a job, mental illness, health problems, substance abuse or the inability to afford decent housing. Help is needed to create safe places for people to call home. You are encouraged to volunteer or make a donation to one of your local programs working to help solve the problems faced by the homeless. For more information, visit <http://www.mihomeless.org>.

MPSC Approves \$8 million in Low-income Energy Efficiency Grants: The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) issued an order on Oct. 22 approving \$8 million in low-income energy efficiency grants to eight organizations. In awarding the grants, the Commission gave consideration to organizations with experience conducting low-income energy efficiency programs with existing administrative structure to handle distribution activities and to organizations capable of offering services statewide. Based on its review, the MPSC awarded the following grants:

- Family Independence Agency - \$4,240,000 for a statewide partnership program with Community Action/Weatherization network to assist low-income households to become energy self-sufficient through energy efficiency upgrades and education.
- Habitat for Humanity - \$175,000 for energy efficiency upgrades in homes projected to be constructed under the Habitat for Humanity program.
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribal Government - \$10,000 for purchase and installation of energy efficient upgrades for tribal owned low-income housing occupied by tribal and non-tribal members.
- M-Tec - \$500,000 for the development and implementation of a revolving loan fund for local housing commissions for purchase and installation of energy efficient upgrades for low-income housing facilities.
- METRO Neighborhood Housing & Community Development - \$1.7 million for improving the energy efficiency of urban homes located in 15 statewide communities by providing energy audits, efficiency upgrades, and energy efficiency training of all participants in the program.
- Nonprofit Facilities Center - \$825,000 for energy efficiency programs directed at non-profit organizations that provide facilities to the many types of low-income persons who do not or cannot own their own homes in the Detroit tri-county area.
- Nova Development Group - \$300,000 for energy efficiency audits, upgrades and installations for low-income, multi-family dwellings throughout Michigan.
- Warm Training Center - \$250,000 for programs of energy education through workshops and home visits to clients referred by agencies located in the city of Detroit.

These grants are part of the Low-Income and Energy Efficiency Fund originally established as part of the Customer Choice and Electricity Reliability Act of 2000 (Public Act 141). The purpose of the fund is to provide shut-off and other protections for low-income customers and to promote energy efficiency by all customer classes.

Protecting Michigan Consumers

2004 Buyers' Guide to Home Insurance Can Be Used to Save Consumers Money: Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Waters announced that the 2004 version of the 2004 Buyers' Guide to Home and Renters Insurance was now available. "Consumers can often save hundreds of dollars by simply picking up the phone and comparing insurance rates," Waters said. "To make this process easier, we've developed new worksheets that consumers can use as they shop for the best deal on home insurance." The guide, which contains the results of an annual rate survey of insurers offering home, rental and condominium insurance in different areas of the state, can be reviewed and downloaded on the Internet at www.michigan.gov/ofis under Publications, Guides, Home Insurance. Hard copies of the guide also are available by contacting OFIS toll free at (877) 999-6442. More information on home insurance can be found on the OFIS homepage <http://www.michigan.gov/ofis> in the area entitled "Rising Homeowners Insurance Rates?"

New Law Takes Effect Requiring Immigration Clerical Assistants To Be Listed with DLEG: DLEG began accepting applications on Oct. 1 for listing immigration clerical assistants as a result of a new state law. The state law took effect on Oct. 1 in an effort to protect Michigan residents who may otherwise be preyed upon by unscrupulous individuals claiming to offer immigration assistance at exorbitant costs. Now consumers will have a list of bonded and qualified individuals to choose from when hiring professionals to assist with obtaining permanent residency, citizenship or jobs. Public Act 161 of 2004 establishes, with some exceptions, that an individual providing services relating to an immigration matter is acting as an immigration clerical assistant and must meet the requirements to be placed on a list of immigration clerical assistants with the DLEG Bureau of Commercial Services. The DLEG Bureau of Commercial Services licenses and regulates more than 1.2 million businesses and individuals in the state of Michigan, including builders, real estate brokers and salespersons, boxers and other professionals. In order to protect consumers, the law requires immigration clerical assistants to:

- Post a \$50,000 bond and file an application with the department to be maintained on the list, which is made available to the public.
- Provide signed contracts to their clients, written in English and the client's native language before services are provided or compensation is received.
- Charge no more for certain services than maximum fees set by law
- For translation documents: \$20.00 per page,
- To complete government agency forms: \$10.00 per page
- Not dispense legal advice or engage in the unlawful practice of law.

Any immigration clerical assistant who violates the law is subject to criminal prosecution and civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction. To learn more about the requirements to be listed as an immigration clerical assistant, obtain an application to be listed, or check for individuals listed with the department, please visit <http://www.michigan.gov/immigrationclerical>, or contact the DLEG Bureau of Commercial Services at (517) 241-8364.

DLEG Employee Named "Fire Inspector of the Year": Tony Sanfilippo, Deputy Director of Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal, received the Fire Inspector of the Year award during the 55th Annual Conference of the Michigan Fire Inspector Society. Sanfilippo, a Charlotte resident, has been a member of the Michigan Fire Inspector Society (MFIS) for more than 19 years. The Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal is an agency in the Department of Labor & Economic Growth. Sanfilippo became involved in the fire service work in 1980 as a paid on-call fire fighter. In 1985, he was hired as a full-time fire inspector for Oshtemo Township in his hometown of Kalamazoo, where he rose through ranks of fire investigator, battalion chief and finally fire chief in 1990. In 1997, Sanfilippo joined the State of Michigan when the Office of Fire Safety was formed by executive order. In addition to being a long-time member of the Michigan Fire Inspectors Society, Sanfilippo also is a member of the International Fire Marshal Association and is currently on the Technical Code Committees for the National Fire Protection Association.



Fire Marshal Andy Neumann (left) presents Tony Sanfilippo with the "Fire Inspector of the Year" award.

MPSC Releases its Michigan Energy Appraisal for Winter 2004-2005: The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) released the "Michigan Energy Appraisal: Winter 2004 - 2005." The appraisal, published since 1978, reviews the projected prices and availability of energy in Michigan over the winter months. The report notes that Michigan's winter energy outlook is for an increase in winter heating bills, as a result of increased heating fuel usage and price increases. This assumes a return to normal weather following last year's 7.7 percent warmer than normal weather. Supplies should be sufficient to meet projected needs, with inventories of natural gas, heating oil and propane either high or the middle of the normal range for this time of year. World oil markets remain tight causing the price of oil to reach record highs. The oil demand growth seen this year and the limited availability of spare production capacity has caused prices to move sharply upward. This has happened when events have reduced production and even when there is only a potential threat of reduced production. The situation was compounded by Hurricane Ivan, which has seriously disrupted oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico, and low world crude oil inventories, which leave little cushion for even temporary reduction in supply. For more information on home heating prices, conservation and efficiency measures to help offset price increases and low-income energy assistance programs see: <http://www.michigan.gov/bewinterwise>. For more information on gasoline prices see: <http://www.michigan.gov/gasprices>.

OFIS Commissioner and Staff Members Meet with Sun Life Officials: Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) Commissioner Linda A. Watters met with Robert Salipante, president of Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada's U.S. operations, and other members of his executive team recently at the company's U.S. headquarters in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts. She was accompanied by Ken Ross, OFIS chief of staff; Barbara Streffling, deputy director of the Enterprise Monitoring and Insurance Examination Division; and Steve Mayhew, enterprise monitoring specialist. The Sun Life family of companies operates around the world, but is primarily headquartered in Toronto. Sun Life Financial Services of Canada is the parent corporation. Sun Life enters into the United States through Michigan as the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. It sells mainly individual and group life insurance. The Michigan Office of Financial and Insurance Services is the primary U.S. regulator and the company had invited Commissioner Watters to visit its offices in Wellesley Hills. The Sun Life officials briefed Commissioner Watters and the other OFIS representatives on the company's recent activities and future plans and initiatives. The group also discussed current events at OFIS. "Our meeting with the Sun Life executives provided us with an excellent opportunity to talk about issues from their perspective as a company doing business in Michigan and from my perspective as the regulator of the insurance industry in this state," Watters said. "It also strengthened our good working relationship," she added.

Assisting Michiganians with Disabilities

Michiganians with Disabilities Finding More Jobs: DLEG's Rehabilitation Services helped 7,110 Michiganians with disabilities prepare and find jobs during fiscal year 2004. The job placements represent a 6.6 percent increase over fiscal year 2003, when 6,670 individuals with disabilities were assisted into the job market. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) operates 36 offices across the state offering an array of services to help adults with disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain employment. Services are tailored for each individual and can include vocational counseling, aptitude testing, job training, job-seeking skills classes, and job placement assistance, among others. Employers can also receive help with disability-related issues, such as consultation on the Americans with Disabilities Act, workstation accommodations, and disability tax credits. For more information about MRS, call 1-800-605-6722 (voice) or 1-888-605-6722 (TTY), or log onto <http://www.michigan.gov/mrs>.

MRS Is Third in Nation for SSA Reimbursements: Approximately 34 percent of the people served by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) receive disability benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA). After a client achieves nine months of substantial gainful activity (currently \$810 a month), MRS can submit a claim for reimbursement of the cost of the programs and services provided to that client. MRS is also reimbursed for administration, counseling and placement (ACP), and tracking costs. The reimbursement amount for ACP and tracking costs is based on a formula that is submitted annually to the SSA. In FY 2003, the SSA reviewed 669 of MRS's claims and reimbursed 391 of them. MRS finished third in the nation in the number of claims reimbursed, behind only California and Ohio. MRS received \$3,954,699 in reimbursement monies, which makes us fourth in the nation in the amount of reimbursement received, behind California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Business People with Disabilities Honored by State Rehabilitation Agencies: Adam Lesh, owner of Ashley Automotive in Auburn, was named Small Business Owner of the Year at the 3rd annual Small Business Recognition Awards Banquet, held recently at the Sheraton Lansing Hotel. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) in the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) sponsor the event to celebrate the achievements of small business owners with disabilities and the services provided by human service professionals who support their endeavors. Lesh, who has quadriplegia, was injured in 1987 while diving into a backyard pool. At the time of his injury, he was a mechanic. Following rehabilitation, he worked at several jobs, but had a dream to own his own auto repair shop. That dream became a reality in February 1998, when he opened Ashley Automotive. He now employs six individuals, two of whom have disabilities. Also receiving awards were:

- Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living, MRS Director's Award, for advancing small business entrepreneurship as a meaningful vocation for people with disabilities.
- Joann Woodward, MCB rehabilitation counselor, Detroit, MCB Employee Award, for conducting research and developing agency policies and procedures for the establishment of small businesses.
- Linda Ackerman, owner of Play-2-Learn Daycare in Fremont, MCB Consumer Entrepreneur Award, for developing a fully functional day care center.
- Marva Ways, independent consultant, disability rights specialist, and motivational speaker, Inkster, Small Business Development Lifetime Achievement Award, also known as the *Heidi Van Arnhem Award,* for embodying the essence of independent living through numerous achievements.
- Rick Weir, business consultant, MicroEnterprise Works, Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living, Small Business External Resource Award, for bringing a reality-based perspective to his customers on what is involved in starting and operating a small business.
- Susie Sedell, MRS administrative support person, Lansing, Small Business Internal Resource Award, for consulting effectively with MRS field offices, customers and community small business resources on MRS's small business procedures.
- Lorna Boes, MRS rehabilitation counselor, Kalamazoo, Small Business Champion of the Year, for her skill in identifying community resources and helping customers do the necessary research before a business plan is considered.
- Randy D. Graise, owner of RanDel Enterprises, a professional speaking and training business in Southfield, was the keynote speaker.

Employer Appreciation/Disability Awareness Breakfast: DLEG's Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) held an Employer Appreciation and Disability Awareness program on Oct. 20. Local Macomb County employers were honored for their involvement in the hiring and training of MRS customers. The event was held at the Sterling Inn located in Sterling Heights. The following companies were honored for their effort in assisting people with disabilities in their endeavor to gain employment and economic independence: All Size Pallets of Imlay City, Alpine Construction of Clinton Twp., Troy Tube of Chesterfield, Whitlam Label of Centerline, ShoreHaven Manor of Sterling Hts, Unique Critique of Shelby Twp., and Best Western-Sterling Inn. Other appreciation awards were given to the Macomb Chamber of Commerce which partners with MRS to publicize the achievements of people with disabilities in overcoming employment barriers. The Chamber also partners with MRS in efforts to educate the employer community regarding disability-related employment issues. The Macomb Co. Regional Small Business & Technology Development Center was honored for assisting MRS customers and their efforts in developing small business/self employment opportunities. In addition, three job developers who work closely with Michigan Rehabilitation Services were recognized: Sarah Utich of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth/ Employer Service Agency, Judy Butkus of New Horizons Rehabilitation Service, Inc and Sherry Rising (self-employed).

Michigan's Learning Disabilities Policy Forum: For a number of years, practitioners in Michigan have recognized the need for more information, education and practical strategies to address the topic of learning disabilities. In response to the need for trained practitioners, Michigan's Office of Adult Education sponsored a Bridges to Practice Train-the-Trainer event in 2002. Because of the initial training, and in response to encouragement from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) a statewide learning disabilities policy initiative, referred to as 'the LD Policy Forum,' began in 2004. The Office of Adult Education, along with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, has taken the lead on this initiative. The initiative currently has representation from Michigan Works!, the state's one-stop services association, Family Independence Agency, Department of Corrections, Michigan's Learning Disabilities Association, and National Human Resources Inc. After a strategic planning session, the policy group agreed to the following goals:

- Identify learning disabilities assessment and screening tools and disseminate for program and agency use.
- Research programs and techniques to support adults with learning disabilities.
- Develop and distribute a Learning Disabilities Resource Directory for either agency or consumer use.
- Make available continuous professional development opportunities related to serving people with learning disabilities.

Progress has been steady on goal one as a Northern Michigan Michigan Works! office is working closely with a consultant (funded through Michigan Rehabilitation Services) to identify employment service agency needs related to job seekers who seem to have learning-related barriers. Installing procedures and policies to help a job seeker discover whether more support is needed requires the education, understanding and training of practitioners. The directory is also under development as there is a strong desire to make available information that supports job seekers and adult learners, Temporary Assistance To Needy Families (TANF), recipients and incarcerated persons in transition to community life. Working together across systems in Michigan is beginning to be a way of life as dedicated professionals recognize, and as budget constraints dictate, the need for cooperation to meet the needs of Michiganders who need supports to address learning disabilities. For more information, contact Linda Colagross, Adult Education, at colagrossl@michigan.gov or (517) 373-6911, or Rosanne Renauer, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, at renauerr@michigan.gov or (517) 373-4056 or TTY accessible 888-6056722.

Promoting Safe Workplaces

DLEG Director Helps Meridian Magnesium Products of America Celebrate

Workplace Safety: Meridian Magnesium Products of America Inc., located in Eaton Rapids, celebrated 2 million hours accident free (lost time) and 10 years of production in the Lansing area. The company presented its 400 employees with leather jackets to acknowledge this significant event. DLEG Director David C. Hollister spoke about worker safety and the impact the company has on the Lansing area. Lost time is based on incidents when an employee is not able to work due to a work-related accident, and as a result of the injury/illness lost one or more days from work. ***At right, DLEG Director David C. Hollister talks to Meridian Technologies President (from Canada) and Eaton Rapids Mayor Don Colestock.***



Promoting Energy Efficiency

MPSC Chair J. Peter Lark Announces Consensus on Michigan Net Metering Program at Alternative Energy Technology Conference in Traverse City:

At a conference on alternative energy technology in Traverse City, Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) Chair J. Peter Lark announced on Oct. 19 that the Michigan Renewable Energy Program has reached a consensus on a potential net metering program in Michigan that could be in place early next year. Net metering occurs when customers produce electric energy in excess of their needs, providing power back to the serving utility and permitting the customer to receive a credit for power they place on the system. "Michigan will soon join 38 other states in offering residents and small businesses a net metering program," said Lark. "This will benefit the state by encouraging the use of renewable energy sources. If enough customers take advantage of this net metering program and install their own renewable energy systems, it will make Michigan less dependent on traditional energy sources and enhance the environment. This order should provide the incentive necessary to residential and small business customers to invest in solar and wind generation." On May 18, the MPSC issued an order directing the Commission staff to work with members of the Michigan Renewable Energy Program Collaborative to form a consensus on net metering and deliver it to the Commission by the Nov. 30 deadline for the 2004 report. Since then, representatives of renewable energy companies, utilities, environmentalists and state government agencies have been involved in a collaborative process to design a proposed net metering program. They recently reached a consensus and will soon forward their proposal to the MPSC. The Commission is expected to issue an order on the proposal, which could be in place early next year.



Japan Gas Association Visits PSC: Representatives from Japanese natural gas companies and the Japan Gas Association visited the Michigan Public Service Commission on Oct. 12. Japan has been in the process of expanding its competitive gas market by offering customer choice programs to smaller residential gas users. In their visit to the PSC, they learned about how Michigan's natural gas market works. This was the third visit to the United States by the Japan Gas Association. ***At left, PSC Chair J. Peter Lark and Commissioner Laura Chappelle welcome members of the Japan Gas Association to the PSC office.***

CHP Systems Significantly Increase Energy Efficiency: Combined Heat & Power or CHP used to be called Co-gen and referred to power plants that provided both electricity and thermal energy for heating. CHP now is used to refer to integrated systems for Cooling, Heating, and Power. Two-thirds of all the fuel used to make electricity in the U.S. is generally wasted by venting unused thermal energy, from power generation equipment, into the air or discharging into water streams. The average efficiency of power generation within the U.S. has remained around 33% since 1960. CHP systems significantly increase efficiency of energy use, up to 85%, by using thermal energy from power generation equipment for cooling, heating and humidity control systems. It has been estimated that Michigan has 3,360 MW (1 MW = 1,000 kW) of CHP at 77 installations. Natural gas is the fuel used at most of these facilities. A preliminary analysis conducted by Shepherd Advisors in January 2003 approached CHP potential from a financial perspective and estimated that it was reasonable to project that more than 1,300 MW of additional CHP could be installed across a variety of sectors in Michigan over the next 10 years. This would represent more than \$1 billion in new CHP opportunities. Shepherd Advisors led a facilitated group process of CHP stakeholders that identified the following market opportunities in Michigan: Community colleges, hospitals, manufacturing facilities, strip malls, office parks, high schools, large dairy farms, hotels/motels, banks, restaurants and small businesses. The group further observed that early adopters within these segments would be those companies that need high electric reliability or power quality, are planning new construction, need equipment replacement, are facing environmental imperatives, and/or are facing cost pressures. Existing information resources include the Midwest CHP Center at <http://www.chpcentermw.org/home.html>. Future resources include an education program being developed by Shepherd Advisors (<http://www.shepherdadvisors.biz/>) with financial support from the DLEG Energy Office <http://www.michigan.gov/energyoffice>.

State Welcomes Cost Saving Ford Hybrids into Fleet: Officials from the State of Michigan, Michigan Environmental Council and Ford Motor Company teamed up at the state Capitol to announce efforts to "green" state government's fleet through the addition of ten new Ford Escape Hybrids. "These vehicles demonstrate the state's continuing commitment to protecting the environment and promoting businesses, while still find ways to cut costs," said Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. "The new hybrids are another resource that we are using to trim the fat and waste in state government. According to state estimates based upon usage, incorporation of the hybrids into the fleet could save up to \$19,000 in annual operating costs, as well as a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80 tons per year. The announcement comes on top of recent efforts to cut some 2,500 vehicles from the state's fleet at a savings of \$4.5 million. The 2005 Ford Escape Hybrid is the first full hybrid SUV to be built in North America. It is capable of running solely on electric power at speeds below 25 miles per hour (mph), and then switching seamlessly into gasoline mode at higher speeds. It has earned an EPA estimated gas mileage of 36 mpg for city driving and 31 mpg on highway roads for front-wheel drive configuration. Escape Hybrid tops the government's 2005 Fuel Economy Guide as the most fuel-efficient SUV. Through a technologically advanced regenerative braking system, the battery automatically recharges as it is driven, so it never needs to be plugged in. In addition to the introduction of hybrids to the fleet, nearly 21 percent of the state's leased fleet is alternatively fueled, which includes electric, compressed natural gas, and flex-fuel engines. A flex-fuel engine is one that can use standard gasoline or an ethanol fuel blend. As a result of this high percentage, the State of Michigan ranks sixth overall among state governments for its number of alternative-energy fleet vehicles, according to Automotive Fleet Magazine.



DLEG Director Hollister, DMB Director Mitch Irwin and Ford Motor Company Vice President of Public Policy and State Governmental Affairs John Bozzella place the state seal on the latest fleet addition.

Developing a 21st Century Workforce

Michigan Regional Skills Alliances Representatives Meet in Lansing:

Business, education, non-profit and other partners from the 13 recently-created Michigan Regional Skills Alliances (MiRSAs) convened for the first time in Lansing Oct. 11-12. Governor Jennifer M. Granholm proposed MiRSAs in her 2004 State of the State to ensure that all job-seekers in industries ranging from construction to nanotechnology, will be trained to do the work that employers need now and in the future. Granholm said, "These RSAs are a way for us to ensure that Michigan has a qualified workforce for Michigan employers, and good jobs for Michigan workers." The state of Michigan, with assistance from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, provided one-year startup grants totaling \$1,050,000 for the initial development of 12 Michigan Regional Skills Alliances. In addition, a 13th MiRSA, focusing on nanotechnology, is being supported by \$100,000 from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The areas served by the 13 Michigan Regional Skills Alliances include all 83 counties in the state. The 13 alliances represent a diversity of industries, including eight alliances in health care, two in manufacturing, one in construction, and one utility. Two RSAs are in the Upper Peninsula.



Brenda Njiwaji (2nd from left), director of DLEG's Bureau of Workforce Programs presents a MiRSA certificate to the Kent County Retention Alliance representatives (from left) Nichole Knight, Connie Bellows, and Andrew Brower.

Governor Announces \$2.5 Million Job Training Grants for 13 Companies:

Economic Development Job Training (EDJT) grants totaling \$2.5 million will help **retain more than 10,000 workers** at 13 Michigan companies. The grants, provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), will enable workers to receive specialized training through nine Michigan colleges, universities and community foundations. Following is a list of the training providers, amount of funding and companies that will benefit from the training:

- Glen Oaks - \$75,724 — American Axle, Three Rivers.
- Henry Ford Community College - \$457,461 — Plastech Engineering, Dearborn
- Kalamazoo Valley Community College - \$50,000 — DesignWare, Kalamazoo.
- Kellogg Community College - \$85,000 — Con Agra Foods, Quincy and TRMI Inc., Battle Creek.
- Macomb Community College - \$430,000 — Fisher Corporation, Troy and General Motors Powertrain facility, Warren.
- Monroe County Community College - \$71,000 — Global Engine Manufacturing Alliance, Dundee.
- Oakland Community College - \$1,032,000 — DaimlerChrysler Corporation, Auburn Hills and Recticel North America Inc., Clarkston.
- St. Clair County Community College - \$146,116 — Collins & Aikman, Port Huron.
- Upjohn Institute of Employment Research - \$203,101 — Flowserve Corporation, Kalamazoo and Stryker Corporation, Kalamazoo.

Agency Welcomed Community to Celebrate More Than Half a Million Served: Capital Area Michigan Works! welcomed hundreds of people, from legislators and businesses people to media and residents, into its three service centers recently to celebrate more than half a million customers served. The service centers, located in Lansing, St. Johns and Charlotte, provided people the opportunity to talk with Capital Area Michigan Works! 19 partner agencies about the variety of services available to job seekers and employers in the capital area. During the Open House in St. Johns, Career Quest Learning Centers, Clinton County Federal Credit Union, Clinton County Family Resource Center, Clinton County Counseling Center, Clinton County, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth Veterans' Services, Clinton County MSU Extension Service and the St. Johns Public Schools were recognized for their support of the program activities at the service center. Capital Area Michigan Works! <http://www.camw.org> is dedicated to assisting employers in the recruitment, training and assessment of employees and providing workforce development services for the general public in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties through programs, classes and its service centers in Lansing, Charlotte and St. Johns.

Streamlining the Permitting Process

Granholt Showcases Trailblazing Permitting Programs MiTAPS, PLEDGE Streamline Business and Air Quality Permitting: Governor Jennifer M. Granholt recently showcased Michigan's new online permitting programs that are cutting red tape and helping Michigan businesses process and receive state permits in record time. Joining the Governor were Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Director Steve Chester, Department of Information Technology (DIT) Director Teri Takai, and Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) Director David C. Hollister. "These first of a kind, streamlined permitting programs are helping to grow Michigan's economy by removing barriers that businesses face when they do business with the State," said Granholt. "Both MiTAPS and PLEDGE allow us to create a better business environment in Michigan - encouraging the retention of existing jobs and the creation of new ones." The Michigan Timely Application & Permit Service (MiTAPS) is a web-based, one-stop shop open 24 hours a day, seven days a week for businesses to apply for a host of permits from State agencies. The address is <http://www.michigan.gov/mitaps>. Promoting Leadership in Environmental Decision-making to Grow our Economy (PLEDGE) is a two-year pilot program designed to ensure timely issuance of environmentally sound air quality permits for major manufacturing facilities. Up to five projects per year will be considered eligible for PLEDGE, and participation requires a commitment by the DEQ and the applicant to participate in a cooperative, transparent manner. The benefits of PLEDGE include the use of project teams to insure prompt review and turn-around time, early involvement, and education of the public. Many businesses will receive permits in less than 100 days, in comparison to the 18 months it has taken in the past.



Gov. Granholt recently showcased the state's new online permitting services through DLEG, DEQ, and DIT. Front row: DIT Director Teri Takai, DLEG Director David C. Hollister. Back row: MiTAPS Project Manager Kim Gearns, DEQ Director Steve Chester and MiTAPS Project Director Henry Green.

Helping Michigan Businesses & Jobless Workers

Rapid Response Section Assists Employers and Displaced Workers: The Rapid Response Section assists employers and displaced workers. The Workforce Transition Section (WTS) responded to 50 notices of planned plant closures or mass layoffs in the last month. Contact was made with employers and union representatives in response to receipt of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice, letter, phone call, newspaper article, or other means of notification. A brief overview of available dislocated worker services was given, and depending on the number of jobs impacted, a formal on-site Rapid Response meeting was scheduled or arrangements were made for the local Michigan Works! Agency to meet with the affected employees to provide information on available services. (Note: 33 of the above resulted from the planned closure of all Frank's Nursery stores as a result of the company's bankruptcy filing.)

- Conducted 15 Rapid Response Meetings with employers (and union representatives, where employees were represented by a collective bargaining agreement).
- Responded to 69 phone calls and 28 e-mails from individuals, company/union representatives, and service providers who requested information or clarification of issues related to the WARN Act and dislocated worker services.
- Participated in 13 Joint Adjustment Committee (JAC) meetings. Joint Adjustment Committees are established to provide a proactive, participatory response to large plant closings or mass layoffs.

WCA Funds Administration Collects More Than \$1 million: The Funds Administration Division within the Workers' Compensation Agency broke the \$1 million mark this year in collecting fines from more than 400 employers, who had allowed their workers' compensation insurance to lapse. The division began collecting fines in late 1999 and collected about \$15,000 that first year. Now, the division collects about \$250,000 a year. All of the collected money is deposited in the agency's revolving fund.

Congress Approves Extension of WOTC and W2W: The U.S. House and Senate approved, and the President signed, legislation extending for two years the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Welfare to Work (W2W) Tax Credit. The two federal tax credits will continue through December 31, 2005, and are effective for wages paid or incurred for individuals beginning work after December 31, 2003. The Unemployment Insurance Agency administers the programs in Michigan. They provide federal tax credits to employers who hire workers from any of nine categories of those who are traditionally hard-to-employ. The maximum WOTC tax credit is \$2,400 per worker, while maximum W2W credit is \$8,500.



Collectors from the Fund Administration Division were nominated for the department's Spirit of DLEG for their collection efforts. Pictured are (l-r): Ray Dwyer, Cheryl Moyer, George Chipman, DLEG Director David Hollister, Ellen Feldpausch and Brian Banfield. (Unavailable for the photo were Jim Messenger and Bob Mills.)

ES Registration Waived for Workers Collecting SUB: Industrial workers who are collecting supplemental unemployment benefits (SUB) are no longer required to register for work with Michigan Works! Unemployed workers on long-term layoffs, like those from Ford, DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, Delphi, Auto Alliance and Visteon, often continue to receive a substantial portion of their wages through SUB pay or through other plans and are "job banked." UIA has adopted a policy that says workers are not required to register for employment services (ES), if they are on indefinite long-term layoff and are paid an amount equal to at least 60 percent of their take-home pay, while working. The new policy is a win-win situation for everyone - employers, workers and our Michigan Works! partners. It frees up limited training and ES resources for other workers; it gives employers more accurate job seeker lists; and it stops workers from spending time on an unneeded registration process.

UIA Opens PROs in Grand Rapids and Saginaw: Unemployed workers who may be having problems with their unemployment claims can receive face-to-face help by visiting two Problem Resolution Offices (PRO) in Grand Rapids and Saginaw. The two locations had been temporary offices but are becoming permanent PROs. The two PROs join those already operating in Gaylord, Lansing, Livonia and Marquette, in tandem with a toll-free customer service line (1-800-638-3995) for problems and information. While the offices do not accept unemployment claims, they will offer telephones and computers for unemployed workers to use in filing claims by phone or Internet. UIA closed the last of its remaining old offices in mid-September.

Gubernatorial Appointments in Workers' Compensation: Governor Granholm made four appointments to the Qualifications Advisory Committee (QAC). She selected Edward M. Welch, Sherisse E. Fiorvento, Phillip Gilliam and Richard Zapala. Welch is director of the Workers' Compensation Center in the School of Labor & Industrial Relations at Michigan State University. He will continue to chair the committee and also represent employee interests. His term expires on October 1, 2008. Fiorvento is general counsel and director of compliance for Visteon. She was reappointed to the committee to represent employer interests. Her new term expires on October 1, 2008. Gilliam, a UAW international representative, speaks for employee interests on the committee and succeeds Joseph Cox who resigned. His term expires on October 1, 2005. Zapala, an assistant general counsel for the Accident Fund Insurance Company of America, takes over for Jack Wheatley, who resigned. He will represent employer interests for a term expiring on December 7, 2007. The QAC reviews and rates applicants interested in serving on the Worker's Compensation Board of Magistrates and Workers' Compensation Appellate Commission. It also reviews the performance of existing appointees to those bodies.



Edward M. Welch chairs the QAC and represents worker interests.

Employers Can e-Register with UI Program: Michigan employers can now register their businesses with the state's unemployment insurance tax program through the Internet, instead of by paper. Employers can register online at the Unemployment Insurance Agency's (UIA) website (<http://www.michigan.gov/uiia>). The online process takes minutes compared to weeks using the paper registration process. The e-registration process is fast, secure and convenient. It also means no lost paperwork and no incomplete registration forms, as all the required information must be data entered before the submission will be accepted. In addition, with the electronic registration process, new employers will have their account numbers, when they begin submitting quarterly tax and wage detail reports, which results in faster processing.

Workers' Comp Pure Premium Rate Drops in 2005: Michigan's yardstick rate structure for workers' compensation insurance premiums will drop by an average 11.2 percent in 2005, its biggest decline in nearly a decade. The state's quasi-public Data Collection Agency Board recently approved the reduction in the average pure premium rate. The rate is the annual measure against which private insurance carriers can compare their rate structures for workers' compensation coverage. The pure premium rate declined, due in part, to well-developed safety programs that reduced losses, more seasoned workers remaining in the work force during job reductions over the past two to three years, and the medical fee schedule adopted by Workers' Compensation Agency, which seems to work better than those in most other states.

UIA Completes Transition to Electronic Claims Filing: UIA has completed its transition to telephone and Internet systems for accepting unemployment claims. With the transition successfully completed, UIA closed three temporary offices that were opened in January 2003 to help workers who were having problems with their unemployment benefit claims. The offices are located in Detroit, Dearborn and Madison Heights. Unemployed workers who may have questions about their specific claims can call the agency's toll-free claims filing telephone line at 1-866-500-0017 and speak with a representative. They can also visit a Problem Resolution Office or call UIA's Customer Relations hotline at 1-800-638-3995 to resolve problems or answer general questions about unemployment benefits.

NGA Revises Employment Security System Policy: The National Governors' Association (NGA) recently adopted a revised "employment security system" policy, which Michigan helped to draft. The governors said they support a national system of state administered unemployment insurance benefits, employment service and labor market information programs.

The key provisions of the revised policy:

- Repeal the temporary 0.2 percent federal unemployment tax surtax immediately;
- Support Reed Act distributions of excess funds in the federal accounts of the unemployment trust fund coupled with a lower ceiling on the federal loan account;
- Authorize the U.S. Treasury to receive requests from states to offset federal income tax refunds to those who have received overpayments of UI benefits from states or who are delinquent in paying state unemployment taxes; and
- Support federal legislation to reduce "SUTA dumping" in state UI tax programs.

Governor's Plan Paid Out \$168 million to Long-Term Unemployed: Governor Granholm's plan to make a temporary change in Michigan's unemployment insurance law allowed 45,000 long-term unemployed workers to collect \$168 million in added jobless benefits. The governor's proposal was overwhelmingly approved by the state legislature in mid-2003 and allowed the payment of additional federal Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC-X), TEUC-AX (for airline industry workers) and federal-state Extended Benefits. The change, which sunset in December 2003, permitted the state to temporarily use an optional mechanism for triggering these additional unemployment benefits. While the modification helped thousands of unemployed workers, it did not produce any extra taxes or charges for employers. In fact, the state was able to leverage \$26 million from the unemployment trust fund into more than \$140 million in federal money to pay out the benefits.

Congress OKs Bill to Ban SUTA Dumping: Both the U.S. House and Senate have approved measures requiring states to close loopholes in their unemployment insurance laws that allow employers to avoid their fair share of taxes. The SUTA Dumping Prevention Act of 2004 would ban schemes where employers use deception to camouflage their true unemployment experience with the aim of paying less in unemployment taxes. The basic idea is to transfer payroll out of an existing company or organization to a new or different organization solely or primarily for the purpose of reducing unemployment taxes. SUTA (State Unemployment Tax Act) dumping is a serious issue. In Michigan, the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund is losing between \$50 and \$100 million annually because of SUTA dumping. UIA established a special unit in its Tax Office to investigate instances of potential SUTA dumping and has started to identify and take action against employers engaging in the practice. Potential state legislation is also under development and should be introduced in Michigan's legislature this fall.

Court Decision Stands Limiting Workers' Comp for Illegal Aliens: Michigan's Supreme Court decided not to rule on a case involving workers' compensation for illegal aliens, even though they had accepted the case and heard oral arguments. Consequently, an earlier Court of Appeals decision stands, saying that an illegal alien is an employee entitled to workers' compensation benefits but may only receive them until their employer discovers their illegal status. The case involves two Mexican immigrants, who were hired by Eagle Alloy Inc., a Muskegon foundry. One of the workers used a fake Social Security number and driver license in applying for his job. In 1998, he became partially disabled when a press machine crushed his hand. The following year the company released the worker when it learned he had entered the country illegally. The worker later applied for and received workers' compensation due to the injury. The company, however, appealed the ruling, arguing that he had violated Michigan law that requires workers' compensation recipients not be imprisoned or committing crimes. The second worker was injured on the job in 1999 and was fired a year later for violating the company's attendance policy. The state appeals court decided that workers' compensation could be halted at the point the company discovered the workers were in the country illegally. The court's decision could have repercussions throughout the country as other states struggle with the questions of whether illegal alien workers are covered for workers' compensation, have the right to sue outside the workers' compensation system, or advantage employers who know illegal aliens have no protections.

AmeriCorps Exempted from State UI Coverage: A recently approved state law exempts AmeriCorps from the unemployment insurance system as long as their contracts with participants contain two elements - participants must have a guaranteed work opportunity, and they must receive their full stipend before the end of the contract. The state House and Senate unanimously supported the bill. AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs that engage more than 50,000 Americans each year to help meet critical needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. AmeriCorps members serve through more than 2,100 nonprofits, public agencies and faith-based organizations. They tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters.

Employer Filed Claims Program Expands: A new employer has joined the ranks of those who are participating in the Employer Filed Claims (EFC) program. Martin Transportation Systems, a Grand Rapids trucking company, became part of the EFC program. EFC allows employers to file unemployment claims on behalf of their workers during large layoffs or shutdowns. Other companies participating in the program are DaimlerChrysler, Delphi, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Steelcase and Visteon.

Resolving Wage & Hour Issues

Wage & Hour Opens Office for the Public in Metro Detroit Area: Using existing state office space, the Wage & Hour Division opened an office in Livonia to serve the Detroit metropolitan area. The office makes the state's wage and hour program more accessible to area employers and workers by providing phone assistance as well as walk-in service. The office is located at 33523 W. Eight Mile. Its phone number is 313-456-4906. In addition, the division has opened its administrative office in Lansing to walk-in customers. The office is located in the state's General Office Building, 7150 Harris Drive, in the Secondary Complex. Its phone number is 517-322-1825. Both offices are open weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Court Rules Michigan OT Wage Law Applies if Higher Federal Standard: A federal judge ruled that in situations where federal overtime law coverage would result in a lower wage than what Michigan law would allow, then the state's Minimum Wage and Overtime Law would apply. The judge's decision involved a case in which several Pepsi employees filed suit, claiming they were paid less because of the Motor Carrier Exemption within the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Federal Judge Richard Alan Enslen ruled that Michigan law would apply, giving the workers more net income. The case is up for reconsideration or appeal to either the Michigan Supreme Court or the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage

COSSA Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month: The Michigan Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs joined with state and national organizations to kick-off Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15th-Oct. 15th). This month is dedicated each year to commemorate the contributions made by Hispanics throughout our nation's history. One of the events COSSA helped sponsor is the Michigan Hispanic Caucus Celebration, which was at the State Capitol and surrounding facilities. The event featured motivational speakers, lunchtime music, dancers, Capitol tours, Museum of Natural History tours and many more events selected to highlight Hispanic contributions to the state of Michigan. McDonald's distributed more than 1,500 meals and two Hispanic restaurants provided 2,000 meals for the festivities. A recognition and scholarship award program was held in the evening and drew 288 attendees to help send Hispanic youth to colleges and universities and to honor our community leaders. Organizers for the event included State Senator Valde Garcia, former State Representative Belda Garza, and the Hispanic Heritage Month Committee. COSSA was created in 1975 to serve Michigan's growing Spanish-speaking population and focuses on education, employment, civil rights, health, housing, senior citizens, just to name a few. For more information, please visit

<http://www.michigan.gov/cossa> or call the commission at 517-373-8339.

Above, musicians and dancers helped kick-off Hispanic Heritage Month festivities at the Capitol. Representing the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs at right are: Commissioner Jose Reyna, Commissioner Danette Duron-Willner, Executive Director Marylou Olivarez-Mason, and Elva Revilla and Bryan Crenshaw (both representing the Governor's Office).



Matching Employers & Workers via the Internet

Michigan Talent Bank's Popularity Continues to Grow: The Michigan Talent Bank, the state's web-based labor exchange system continues to grow in popularity with 968 new businesses registered with the Talent Bank in the most recent month reported. This brings the total number of active employers to 66,994, a 17% increase over the same time period last year. Employers created 7,810 job orders, which resulted in 21,296 new job openings (a 21.8% increase over the previous year), bringing the total number of active job openings to 34,315. Job seeker activity for the month included 899,125 job order searches. With an additional 228,136 conducted by job scouts, the job search total reached 1,127,261. The total number of resumes available for employers to view grew by 4.6% to 639,132 (a result of 31,570 new resumes added to the system). Michigan businesses conducted a total of 59,352 resume searches. The Michigan Talent Bank is located at <http://www.michworks.org>.

DLEG Sponsors Michigan YES! Youth Engineering and Science Expo, November 6: DLEG's Office of Career and Technical Preparation partnered with Michigan Technological University to host the Michigan YES! Youth Engineering and Science Expo which was held November 6, at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor. Companies and universities from throughout Michigan came together at this first-time event to excite youth in grades 8-12 about education and careers in science and engineering. The YES! Expo was held in conjunction with the Bash at the Big House football game between Michigan Tech and Grand Valley State University at Michigan Stadium on the University of Michigan campus. Each ticket admitted one student to the YES! Expo and the football game. 5,000 students came through (plus their parents) and over 100 schools were represented. The expo took place before and after the football game. Corporations, organizations, and individuals sponsored blocks of expo tickets given to youth at no charge through the school systems. Special efforts were made to provide tickets to underrepresented groups. A registration packet and complete expo information was mailed out in early September. The YES! Expo consisted of engineering and science exhibits and a multi-media show all designed to develop interest in engineering and science careers in Michigan. Students were also able to talk with real engineers and scientists. Universities showed unique and dynamic educational pathways that lead to these careers. For more information, visit the Michigan YES! Expo Web site at <http://www.mtu.edu/yes>.

Governor Granholm and the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth Announce \$97 Million for Education and Job Training: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth announced \$97million in funding to help more than 100,000 Michiganders qualify for better-paying jobs through education, training and employment-related services such as job search assistance. This FY 2005 funding is provided to the state's 25 Workforce Development Boards to fund services through the corresponding 25 Michigan Works! Agencies. "This funding will deliver the training and support services that people need to trade in an assistance check for a paycheck," said Granholm. "The Work First Program provides the links that allow participants to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence from public assistance." The purpose of Work First is to offer educational and employment training and services to increase a person's income, therefore reducing or eliminating the need for public assistance. To view an interactive map of the state's Michigan Works! regions and the counties included in each region, go to <http://www.michiganworks.org/page.cfm/14>.